

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD
HOUSE SPEECHES AND INSERTS
July 25, 2014

THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR. OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 25, 2014

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, July 25, 2014 marks the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Legal Services Corporation, a private, nonprofit corporation tasked with ensuring equal justice for all Americans who are unable to afford legal representation. The creation of LSC was long-championed by President Richard Nixon who ultimately signed its enabling legislation on July 25, 1974 with bipartisan support from the Congress. Federally-funded, LSC awards grants to 134 local legal aid programs, with nearly 800 offices serving every congressional district and the U.S. territories.

LSC-funded legal aid programs provide vital civil legal assistance to the needy, including women seeking protection from domestic abuse, mothers trying to obtain child support, families facing unlawful evictions or foreclosures that could leave them homeless, veterans seeking benefits duly earned, seniors defending against consumer scams, and individuals who have lost their jobs and need help in applying for unemployment compensation and other benefits.

Unfortunately, because of a decrease in its federal funding over the last several Congresses, LSC-funded programs have had to turn away more than 50 percent of eligible clients seeking assistance. With the growing number of Americans eligible for services and increased demand for legal services, the need for legal aid attorneys has never been greater. We should do more to support this vital program and protect our fellow Americans.

As President Nixon said in support of his legislation creating LSC, “[W]e must provide a mechanism to overcome economic barriers to adequate legal assistance.” On this 40th anniversary of the Legal Services Corporation, we should recommit ourselves to the founding principle and continue to ensure that LSC can fulfill its critical mission through sufficient funding.

I commend LSC and its grantee programs for the vital work they do every day on behalf of Americans who need qualified counsel and for continuing its mission of equal justice for all.